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Spanish Food – How To Prepare Boquerones.

By Linda Plummer

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Whilst on your travels in Spain and pausing to take a breath from site-seeing, you have surely experimented with "tapas" at a welcoming bar.

If this is the case, it is more than likely that you have come across the small, tasty filleted fish, preserved in olive oil, sliced garlic and chopped parsley, and highly popular throughout Spain. This delectable dish is usually known as "boquerones" but, depending on the area, can also be called "anchoas".

Boquerones are small, fresh anchovies. Accompanied by crisp, fresh Spanish bread, a glass of ruby-red wine or refreshing Asturian cider, they are a delight to eat. Moreover – as with many traditional Spanish dishes which comprise the renowned Mediterranean Diet – they are extremely healthy.

Like its friend the sardine, the anchovy is an oily fish, packed full of proteins and minerals, protecting against heart disease, and "good" for cholesterol. What's more, in many areas of Spain – in particular the Mediterranean coast – fresh anchovies are extremely cheap.

On first coming to Spain, I happily enjoyed many tapas of boquerones, completely unaware of one fact ... all those little anchovies I had eaten were not cooked! For a moment, I deeply regretted asking my Spanish neighbor, Carmen, how to make them!

Fortunately, Carmen went into immediate action and saved the day! She frog-marched me to the local fishmongers, bought a kilo of the little fish, took me home and showed me "her way" of preparing them. They were so delicious that I quickly recovered my passion for boquerones and have been enjoying them ever since!

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Methods for preparing boquerones tend to vary slightly from family to family. However, the basic principles are always the same. You first have to clean and fillet the fish, which is simple enough, but rather tedious until you get the hang of it.

Next, you soak the fillets, either in white wine vinegar or a mixture of half vinegar and half water. The vinegar will clean and bleach the fish and also soften any remaining little bones. Some people sprinkle the fish with salt; others (myself included) feel that the fish is salty enough already.

The fish has to be left for a good few hours soaking in the vinegar. Again, this tends to vary, with some Spaniards leaving them overnight in the fridge and others just waiting a couple of hours. Also, some families change the vinegar/water–and–vinegar mixture once during this process, whilst others don't bother.

Once you have thrown away the vinegar, the bleached fillets are covered with a good quality virgin olive oil, which will preserve them. You can add as much, or as little, sliced garlic as you wish, plus

freshly chopped parsley.

So ... here is the actual recipe.

BOQUERONES

Ingredients: 1 kilo fresh anchovies. White wine vinegar. Virgin olive oil. Garlic. Parsley. Salt (optional).

Method: Top and tail anchovies. Slit along underside and discard innards. Open out fish. Remove central bone by lifting from tail end upwards. Rinse well. Place a layer of anchovy fillets in a shallow dish. Sprinkle with salt (optional) and pour on plenty of vinegar. Repeat with another layer, changing direction. Leave to soak in vinegar for a few hours or overnight. Pour off vinegar. Very gently rinse fillets. Cover fillets in virgin olive oil. Add slices of garlic and chopped parsley.

It is so pleasant to find something in life that is a delight to the senses, affordable, healthy and does nobody any harm (apologies to any vegetarians out there and, also, the little anchovies ...). So ... do make the most of fresh anchovies whilst you are in Spain and enjoy!

Linda Plummer is English and has lived on the Costa Blanca in Spain for 20 years. She is webmistress of the information– rich site:

with its FREE monthly

newsletter, "The Magic of Spain".

An Easy Comparison Of The English To Spanish Alphabet

By Jerry K. Blackburn

Learning the Spanish alphabet requires only learning three more letter than are found in the English alphabet. These include ch (che), ll (elle) and H (eHe). They fit into the alphabet in an order that also makes sense, following the letter from the English alphabet that starts with the same similar letter. Here is the order they appear in:

a,b,c,ch,d,e,f,g,h,I,j,k,l,ll,m,n,o,p,q,r,s,t,u,v,w,x,y,z.

Letters Not A Part of the Alphabet

There is some controversy, believe it or not over a couple of the letters that come from other languages of similar origin. This lies with the letters "w" and "k." There are not any Spanish words that contain these letters, unless they were added to the language from some foreign translation. In addition the letter "rr" not in our list above is used in some versions of the Spanish alphabet. It is used to make a stronger "r" sound, usually in the case where the "r" is drawn out in a rolling sound.

Putting Things in ABC Order

A Spanish dictionary may add more confusion to the inclusion of some letters of this language's alphabet. For example, older edition dictionaries might list all the words containing "ch" after all "c" words. In newer versions, the words containing "ch" go in alphabetical order just like in English. The opposite is true when it comes to "n" and "H." In this case "H" comes after "n." This whole change took place as recently as 1994.

Not officially a part of the Spanish alphabet, there are many other "letters" created by the addition of accents. Many vowels such as o, e, or u have accents added which change the pronunciation and also the meaning. Many other languages treat accented letters as separate letters and add them to their alphabets. This is not true of Spanish.

What Spanish Letters Sound Like

English letters are not given names and neither are Spanish letters. However, when you say the letter it has a pronunciation all its own that could be thought of as its name. The following is the Spanish alphabet with a pronunciation guide. Remember, this is not a phonetic pronunciation, even though some of the English letters will have a similar sound. And of course, you need to take into account the Spanish accent.

A: a B: be C: ce CH: che D: de E: e F: efe G: ge H: hache I: i J: jota K: ka L: ele LL: elle M: eme N: ene Ñ: eñe O: o P: pe Q: cu R: ere S: ese T: te U: u V: ve W: doble u X: equis Y: i griega Z: zeta

If you speak English (and that's a good assumption since you are reading this in English) then you already know many Spanish words. Spanish and English have the same basis as all Romance languages. The spelling may be different such as between the words baby in English and bebe in Spanish but the pronunciation is very close, differing only in the accent given the words.

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Once you have mastered the sounds of each letter it is easy to begin learning Spanish. You'll be prepared for your next vacation to Spain, or at the very least, be able to help your kids with their homework!

The Spanish people are warm and welcoming to American or other visitors. They will be flattered that you are making an effort to communicate with them in Spanish, but in tourist or cosmopolitan areas, you will find everyone also speaks fluent English. Don't let that discourage you. Keep practicing you Spanish for your next visit to Spain.

Jerry Blackburn pens for the most part for

, a web publication with

information about Spain and spanish culture. With his detailed writings like

,he proofed his expertise in the field.

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